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A

DISCOURSE

ON THE

Prayer of Jabez;

Containing the

SUBSTANCE

OF SEVERAL

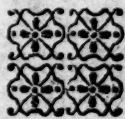
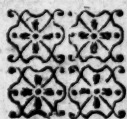
SERMONS

PREACHED

Within CRIPPLEGATE.

*Publsh'd at the REQUEST of some who
heard them.*

By JOHN BRINE.



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DISCOUNT

FOR THE



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I CHRON. iv. 10.

And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, O that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my Coast; and that thine Hand might be with me; and that thou wouldest keep me from Evil, that it might not grieve me. And God granted unto him that which he requested.



THIS Chapter, with several others, contain an Account of the Families of the Children of *Israel*. The Person whom these Words concern was of that Race, but of what particular Family is not very evident^a. He is declared to be *more honourable than his Brethren* in the Verse preceding, *viz.* for his Piety, as we have reason to conclude from these Words, which are taken by some as a Vow, by others as a solemn

^a Quis hic fuerit non constat, neque quis Pater vel Avus ipfius.

Deprecation^b. The latter Sense is agreeable to me. In this Commendation of *Jabez* we may observe,

I. His solemn Worshipping of God;
He called on the God of Israel.

II. The Favours he humbly asked.

III. The gracious Answer he received;
God granted unto him that which he requested.

I. We are to consider his solemn Worshipping of God. I shall,

First, Attend to the Title the great Jehovah has here given him.

Secondly, To *Jabez*, his Adoration of him.

First, It will be proper to take Notice of the Character ascribed to the Divine Being, which is the God of *Israel*. This Name *Israel* was given to *Jacob* upon his wrestling with God by Prayer and prevailing^c; which Name his natural Posterity afterwards bore; by it the Body of the *Jewish* Nation is frequently designed, as in these Words, *But Israel, which followed after the Law of*

^b Votum fuit conditionale, quid vero promissum fit eo voto reticetur. Nam sicut Hebraei in jurando, Poenam quam in se imprecantur saepe omittunt, ita etiam quandoque, votum sive promissum tacent in precibus eorum. Alii volunt esse formulam deprecativam & τὸ εἰ affirmative capiendum pro utinam. *Poli Synops. in loc.*

^c Gen. xxxii. 28.

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5

Righteousness, hath not attained to the Law of Righteousness^d. Thus also in the same Epistle, *Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for*^e. The Lord styles himself the God of this People in general; *I am the Lord thy God*^f. Which Words refer to the *Jews* understood collectively, and design taking them under his providential Care and Protection, and conferring upon them such Immunities as no other Nation in the Earth at that Time enjoyed; but are not expressive of God's standing in an everlasting Relation to them, by virtue of the Covenant of Grace. In other Places, a peculiar People among them, with many of the *Gentiles*, are plainly designed: Thus in these Words of the Apostle, *And so all Israel shall be saved*^g. The whole Race of the *Jews* cannot be here intended, for they were not all eternally saved; and since the Apostle in this Place designedly treats of the Calling of the *Gentiles*, he must intend, by the Term *Israel*, a special and peculiar Number of Persons, of the *Jewish*, and *Gentile* Race: To whom God stands in a new Covenant-Relation, or he is their God in such a Sense, as he is not the God of any others; he became so, in all that he is and has, by an Act of free Donation.

^d Rom. ix. 31.

^e Chap. xi. 7.

^f Exod. xx. 2.

^g Rom. xi. 26.

1. God gave himself to them, which is evident from that comprehensive Promise of the new Covenant, *And they shall be my People, and I will be their God^h*. The Father formed a Resolution in Eternity to render the Elect happy; and in infinite Wisdom fixed upon Methods no less surprizing than effectual, to bring about this gracious Intention: All his Decrees are subservient to this Purpose, and his Acts in Providence as well as Grace tend to its Accomplishment; so that the Whole of what he does, is wisely calculated, to promote the Happiness of those to whom he stands in a foederal Relation. It is his unalterable Determination to enjoy, and for ever to be enjoyed by them, or eternally to communicate consummate Bliss, and inconceivable Glory to them in Heaven. With very good Reason therefore, it may be concluded, that the Person of the Father is theirs.

2. This is as true of the Son, who, with the Father, concurred in the Design of their eternal Salvation, and is given to them, and for them; *For God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Sonⁱ*. This Donation of Christ was the Result of his own, as it is of the Father's good Pleasure. All that he did, or

^h Jer. xxxii. 38.

ⁱ John iii. 16.

acts, is with a manifest View to the Welfare of these Persons: His Assumption of our Nature, obeying the Law, suffering on the Cross, and rising from the Dead, his Ascension to Heaven, and making Intercession there, all directly tend to secure the everlasting Felicity of God's Chosen. Whence it is easy to observe, that God the Son is become theirs.

3. They have the same Interest in the Holy Spirit, who is also given to them: *Because the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given unto us*^k. The third Person in the Trinity agrees with the Father and the Son in carrying on the Design of the Salvation of Sinners: He is not less concerned in this great Affair; pursuant to the Father's Purpose in Election, and the Son's in Redemption, the Holy Spirit quickens the Elect, when dead in Sin, and continues his Influences upon them, to ripen the Work of Grace in them, until it is perfected in Glory. At the Time of Regeneration he enters into the Soul, and remains there as a Spirit of Illumination and Consolation: *He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever*^l. Thus all the Persons in the Godhead are the Saints.

^k Rom. v. 5.

^l John xiv. 16.

All the Divine Attributes are the Elects; every Perfection in God displays it self in bringing about their Salvation.

1.) Love gave birth to the Design, and runs through every Part of it. Our Predestination to immortal Dignity and Honour, such as is proper to the Sons of God, *is to the Praise of the Glory of Free Grace*^m. All the Steps that God has took in order to its Accomplishment, are Fruits of the same infinite Goodness. All his Procedures towards these Persons spring from, and are perfectly consistent with his Love to them. Hence the Apostle *John* observes, that *God is Love*ⁿ, i. e. to those who by his Spirit know and believe their Interest in Divine Favour.

2.) The Wisdom of God hath 'as deeply interested it self in promoting of the Saints Happiness: His Love and Grace formed the Resolution, and Wisdom directed to all the Means leading on to the Execution. As only boundless Grace could give Rise to the stupendous Decree of saving Sinners, so infinite Wisdom alone could surmount the Difficulties attending it, and point out Methods suitable to accomplish it. In our Salvation Sin is par-

^m Eph. i. 5, 6.

ⁿ 1 John iv. 16.

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done and yet punished; we escape the Curse of the Law notwithstanding its just Menaces are suffered; we are delivered from the awful Stroke of Sin-avenging Justice, and yet it loses nothing of its Demands. We are wholly unable to obey the Law, but yet we are justified by it, and pronounced perfectly righteous; all which is through the Obedience and Sufferings of Christ for us. This Way of securing Divine Honour, in conjunction with our Happiness, sufficiently evinces, that infinite Wisdom contrived our Recovery. For this Reason the Apostle calls the Gospel, which is a Revelation hereof, the *Wisdom of God in a Mystery; and the hidden Wisdom, that God ordained to our Glory* °.

3.) The Power of God has ever acted in favour of the Elect. Such Obstructions attended their Salvation that Omnipotence only could remove; and such Adversaries are engaged against them, that almighty Power alone could conquer. They are naturally in such a State which requires the Exertion of the same unlimited Power to meeten them for Glory. And the Number, Policy, and Vigilance of their Enemies, with their own Weakness, make it necessary for them to expect

° 1 Cor. ii. 7.

all their Protection from above. Their Redemption was a Work of Divine Power; hence Christ, as crucified, is said to be the *Power* as well as the *Wisdom of God*^p. Nor is this Divine Perfection less apparent in their Preservation to Glory, *who are kept by the Power of God unto Salvation*^q.

4.) Divine Faithfulness stands engaged for the Security of God's People. Many and full are the Promises that refer to the Salvation of *Israel*: All which may be safely relied on, because of the eternal Veracity of their infinitely great Author, who it is absolutely impossible should ever fail of accomplishing what he has given his Word to do for any. This the Apostle improves as an Encouragement to Faith, under Sufferings for the Gospel's sake; *If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself*^r. He is not mutable, as Creatures are, but is eternally above all *Variableness* or *shadow of Turning*^t. He never declines in his Favour, nor sinks below his gracious Engagements. Since therefore he designed, and has promised the compleat Happiness of his own, as appears in these Words, *In hope of eternal Life, which God that cannot lye promised*^u, it may be justly concluded, that *they shall be*

^p 1 Cor. i. 24.

^q 1 Pet. i. 5.

^r 2 Tim. ii. 13.

^s James i. 17.

^t Titus i. 2.

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II

sanctified wholly, that their Soul, Body and Spirit, shall be preserved blameless unto the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; as the same Apostle observes, Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it^u.

5.) The Justice of God acts in favour of the Elect, as well as the other Divine Perfections; that is an Attribute which strikes a guilty Creature, without hope of an Interest in Christ, with the greatest Terror; it speaks nothing but eternal Destruction to a Sinner out of him, and therefore the Consideration of it must be most awful, without a View of his Satisfaction. But as its Demands have been fully answered by Christ, the Surety of his People, it concurs with Goodness in promoting their Salvation; *Mercy and Truth are met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other^w.* Since plenary Satisfaction is made for the Sins of the Elect, this Perfection in God stands engaged for their Security. Justice to Christ their Head, who suffered for them, requires their eternal Felicity; and therefore this Divine Attribute, which cannot be thought of, by guilty Creatures as such, without the greatest Emotion, affords solid Peace and Tranquillity, to those who are interested in Christ, because the Honour

^u 1 Thef. v. 23, 24.

^w Psal. lxxxv. 10.

of it is as much concerned in their Happiness as the Glory of rich Grace; *whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation, through Faith in his Blood, to declare his Righteousness, for the Remission of Sins that are past, through the Forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this Time his Righteousness, that he might be just, i. e. appear to be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*^x.

2. All that God has is the Saints: His infinite Treasures of Grace and Glory are all made theirs by an Act of his sovereign Will, in order to their eternal Happiness.

(1.) His Grace. He is infinitely rich in Mercy in himself; *but God who is rich in Mercy*^y. And he has an immense Stock of Grace by him, which he designed to communicate to the Objects of his Favour; hence says the Psalmist, *O! how great is thy Goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the Sons of Men*^z. The Apostle Peter styles the Lord, *the God of all Grace*^a. There is no Grace the Saints can need, but it is in their Covenant-God, and will be communicated to them. As guilty Creatures Pardon is ne-

^x Rom. iii. 25, 26.

^y Eph. ii. 4.

^z Psal. xxxi. 19.

^a 1 Pet. v. 10.

cessary,

cessary, this they plentifully receive, yea, equal to the Greatness of their Guilt, how much soever it is aggravated; *in whom we have Redemption through his Blood, even the Forgiveness of Sins, according to the Riches of his Grace*^b. As stripp'd of original Righteousness, a compleat one they must be furnished with from another, in order to their Acceptance; this they have in Christ, *according to the same Grace*^c. As polluted Creatures, Holiness is necessary to be wrought in them, to meeten them for everlasting Happiness; this also they partake of, from the same Fountain of God's Free Grace. Their Regeneration is an Effect of that *abundant Mercy*^d which there is in their heavenly Father. As they are weak or unable to defend themselves, and their Enemies are numerous and potent, continued Supplies of Grace are absolutely needful to preserve them from falling; this shall not be wanting to them, *For God will supply all their Need, according to his Riches in Glory, ἐν Χριστῷ, in Christ Jesus*^e. Thus the God of all Grace, will dispense all that Grace which is necessary for them; *he will give Grace*^f, yea, *more Grace to the humble*^g, whatever they need.

^b Eph. i. 7.
^c Phil. iv. 19.

^e Titus iii. 7.
^f Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

^d 1 Pet. i. 3.
^g James iv. 6.

(2.) Glory is made theirs; a never failing Fountain of which there is in God; hence he is stiled the *Father of Glory*^h, as he is *the Father of Lights*ⁱ, because all spiritual Illumination and eternal Rays of Light spring from him. Our Ideas of the happy State of Saints departed fall vastly below the Greatness of its Glory: *It doth not yet appear*, i. e. it is not at present known *what we shall be*^k. The most we are now able to say of heavenly Bliss, is, that it consists in uninterrupted Communion with God and Christ, and transforming Views of his ever glorious Person, who is *fairer than the Children of Men*^l: *When he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*. Christ, *the Sun of Righteousness*^m, sheds Beams of Light upon all the Inhabitants of the upper World, which they reflect to their mutual Pleasure and Admiration, as we are fully assured; but while we are here our Conceptions cannot rise up to the Blessedness of that State, the Imperfection of our present, renders us unable to form adequate Ideas of the amazing Glory of our future State. It is not possible to know what the Happiness of Heaven is before its Enjoyment; it is an *exceeding and an eternal*

^h Eph. i. 17.ⁱ James i. 17.^k 1 John iii. 2.^l Psal. xlv. 2.^m Mal. iv. 2.

*Weight of Glory*ⁿ; it far exceeds the Compass of our imperfect Understandings, we cannot comprehend it; and the Weakness of our mortal Frame, which must be changed in order to bear it. Now all this inconceivable Glory is absolutely given to God's *Israel*, by him who is the Source of it, and is able to preserve them to it: *In hope of eternal Life, which God that cannot lye promised before the World began*^o.

There are several Things concerning the Act of God's giving himself to his *Israel* very worthy of our Notice. As,

1. It was an Act of pure Grace. This Procedure of God, in favour of his People, can be resolved into no other Cause, than that of his *own good Pleasure*. He stands in such a Relation to them which he does not to others; but it is not because they are preferable to those who have no such foederal Interest in him, their Nature is as depraved, and their Actions are as contrary to his Law. The Apostle answers this Question, *Are we better than they?* in the Negative, *no, in no wise*^p; and therefore nothing in them could induce God thus to become theirs in a Covenant-way, it's the Result of his own Free Grace alone.

ⁿ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

^o Titus i. 2.

^p Rem. iii. 9.

2. This was an Act of Sovereignty. It was merely owing to the Divine Will that *Peter* was interested in God, and not *Judas*. None among the Sons of Men can lay claim to so high a Privilege as their Due, for they all deserve to be eternally banished from God, and to lie under his awful Vengeance, on Account of their Corruption and Guilt: Hence it is evident, that the Interest any of them have in God, must be ascribed to his sovereign Determination, thus, to shew Favour to them, while he refuses this Dignity and Happiness to others, not more undeserving of his favourable Notice than they are; agreeable to the Apostle's Observation, *He hath Mercy on whom he will have Mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth*^a.

3. It is an irreversibile Act. The Elect can never be deprived of that Covenant-Interest which they have in God. The Cause and Spring of it will never cease; that is to say, the Love of God, which is absolutely immutable, and therefore eternally secures their Interest in himself. It is by virtue of a firm Covenant of Grace that God is theirs, in which he engages, *they shall be his People, and he will be their God*^r. This Covenant he will not break, nor alter the Thing that is gone out of his Lips^s. But

^a Rom. ix. 18.^r Jer. xxxii. 38.^s Psal. lxxxix. 34.

unless the Covenant of Grace can be violated, the Saints will not lose their Interest in its infinitely great Author, which never can be, for the Accomplishment of all its glorious and precious Promises entirely rests on the Veracity and Faithfulness of God himself: It therefore *is a sure Covenant* ^t, and being so, all in that Covenant stand in an inseparable Relation to God. Farther, there is an indissoluble Union subsisting between Christ and the Saints; he is their Head, and they are his Members; nor will it ever be in the Power of any to rend them from him. And so long as this Union continues, they may depend upon a peculiar and foederal Interest in the Father; till he ceases to be a God to the Head, he will not cease to be a God to the Members. Christ is ascended to his *God and our God, to his Father and our Father* ^u. These Things abundantly evince the eternal Duration of our Interest in the great Jehovah.

From this Doctrine I infer two Things,

1. That Believers have no cause of Fear:

'Tis true, their Enemies are very numerous, and their Power is exceeding great, and they are not capable of defending themselves a Moment; notwithstanding which, they have no reason to be terrified,

^t 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

^u John xx. 17.

for Omnipotence it self is engaged in their Security, and therefore the Will of their Adversaries shall never be accomplished upon them: Each of them may say with the Psalmist, *The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the Strength of my Life, of whom shall I be afraid?*

2. Believers only are happy Persons. Happiness all Men are seeking to obtain, but they are either fatally mistaken in their Notions concerning it, or in the Way to arrive at the Possession of it: Many conceive that it consists in Riches, Pleasures and Honours; others imagine, that extensive Knowledge, and Tranquillity of Mind, is true Felicity. These come nearer to it than the former, but yet fall short; 'tis only the Knowledge of, and Communion with God in a Mediator, a settled Peace, and Composure of Mind arising from thence, that our real Happiness consists in here; and consummate Felicity hereafter will consist in Conformity to, and in the Enjoyment of God and Christ, which is not attainable by any Thing that we can do, as Men naturally conceit. The Children of God are, many of them, poor, afflicted, and despised in this World, yet they alone are truly happy Persons, because

^w Psal. xxvii. 1.

they

Prayer of Jabez. 19

they only are interested in God, the Source and Fountain of real and perfect Bliss. *Happy is that People whose God is the Lord^x, to them he will shew the Path of Life; in his Presence is Fulness of Joy, and at his right Hand are Pleasures for evermore^y.*

Secondly, I proceed to consider, *Jabez* his solemn Worshipping of God, *He called on the God of Israel*. By this is sometimes intended Worship in general, as in these Words, *Then began Men to call upon the Name of the Lord^z*, i. e. to join together in his publick Worship. In other Places; it designs a particular Branch of religious Worship, *viz. Prayer*; thus in these Words, *and call upon me in a Day of Trouble^a*. This is a Part of natural Religion; or, it is a Duty of a moral Nature, and is incumbent on all Persons; as well on the Unregenerate as on those who are born again; hence the Apostle *Peter*, at the same Time he tells *Simon Magus* that *he was in the Gall of Bitterness, and Bond of Iniquity*, puts him upon the Practice of this Duty; *and pray God^b*. Although the *Prayer of an unregenerate Person, is an Abomination^c*, he is not excusable in the Neglect thereof: Greater Guilt is contract-

^x Psal. cxliv. 15. ^y Psal. xvi. 11. ^z Gen. iv. 26.
^a Psal. l. 15. ^b Acts viii. 22, 23. ^c Prov. xxviii. 9.

ed by the entire Omission of a Duty, than attends the improper Discharge of it. If Prayer is neglected by unregenerate Persons, because they cannot perform it in an acceptable Manner, they may also decline to perform the civil Actions of Life upon the same Principle, for *the Plowing of the Wicked is sin^d*; which, I suppose, none will think it proper they should. What I shall farther offer on this Head, immediately concerns the Saints; and it will be contained in shewing this to be their Duty; that the Holy Spirit is their Director in it; and, that they have great Encouragements to practise it.

1. Prayer is the indispensable Duty of Believers. This is so evident, that I imagine I might be excused insisting on the Proof of it, however backward, through various Causes, they may sometimes be to engage in it.

1.) Personal and private Prayer is a Duty they are under Obligation conscientiously to regard; Jesus Christ exhorts to this, *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy Closet, and when thou hast shut thy Door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly^e*. The Variety of our Wants, the Multitude of our Difficulties,

^d Prov. xxi. 4.

^e Matth. vi. 6.

the great Number of our Temptations, our own Inability, and absolute Dependance on God, should excite us to a *constant* Attendance at the Throne of Grace. I am of Opinion, we may best judge of the Case of our Souls, by a Readiness to draw nigh to God in secret Prayer, or a Backwardness to approach his Presence in our Closets. If a spiritual Frame is maintained in us we shall closely attend to this Duty; but if we are lukewarm, and sunk in the Exercise of our Graces, we shall be ready to improve every trivial Affair which may occur, as an Excuse for our Neglect in this Thing. This is as well our Privilege as our Duty. In Prayer to God we may use the utmost Freedom in Complaints: We need have no Check upon us, from an Apprehension that he will take Advantage against us for, or upbraid us with, those Evils we complain of before him; this too frequently is the Manner of poor guilty Creatures towards one another, but it is not the Manner of an infinitely gracious God, we therefore may unbosom our whole Souls to him, and tell him of any, or all the *vile Lusts* that distress and plague us: We may mention all our Temptations, and freely confess how ready our corrupt Nature is to yield to them, or how far it may have so done, in any Instances, to our unspeakable Grief, without the least Thought
of

of being upbraided therewith hereafter. We also may be full as free in our Petitions: As God *is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think^f*: He allows us to intreat for whatever is needful to our spiritual Support, Relief, and Consolation. Since we have this liberty of Access to the Throne of Grace, and may use such freedom in our Addresses to our heavenly Father, how base are our Hearts, which frequently tempt us to decline the Practice of this important Duty, and the Improvement of so inestimable a Privilege.

2.) Family Prayer should be constantly attended to. The Worship of God ought to be maintained in all the Families of the Saints. That Family in which solemn and joint Prayer is wholly neglected, is far from being such as it ought to be; in this Particular 'tis very much unlike a Christian one; happy would it be with us were we wrought up to the same Resolution that *Joshua* was, who said, *As for me and my House we will serve the Lord^g*; for we should certainly find our own Advantage in it. The great God will shew very high Resentment against those Families that neglect his Worship: *Pour out thy Fury upon the Heathen, that know thee not, and upon all the Families that call*

^f Eph. iii. 20.

^g Josh. xxiv. 15.

not on thy Name^h. It cannot but be thought a Duty incumbent on Masters of Families, to pray with, and for their Children and Servants, whom Providence has put under their Care and Inspection; a faithful Attendance hereon may, at least, strike their Minds with an Awe of God, and lay such a Check upon them, which may prevent their sinning as others do. I doubt not but many can attest to the Truth of this by their Experience. Besides, as we ought to endeavour the Conviction of those under our immediate Notice, we can't tell how far God may please to succeed the Discharge of our Duty in this Particular that way; however, whether or not the Effect follows, which we should desire, that is to say, the spiritual Good of those about us, we shall keep clear of *their Blood*, if we are found in the Practice of our Duty towards them. It is not improbable but some may say, they are convinced it is their Duty to pray in their Families, but that they are not furnished with suitable Gifts, and therefore they are obliged to omit it; such I would ask, if they have at all attempted it? If they have not they must allow me to say, it is trifling to urge their Want of proper Furniture, as an Excuse for this Neglect. Besides, it can hardly be thought,

^h Jer. x. 25.

that a Person sensible of himself, his State by Nature, his Need of Christ, and of his Suitableness as a Saviour, can be utterly unable to perform this Branch of religious Worship in his own Family, where strict Method, proper Coherence, and Fluency of Expression, are not absolutely necessary to the useful Discharge of it. Again, Gifts improve by using: I have known some who were not eminently furnished for such a Work, that upon the Exercise of the Abilities they had, a Blessing has attended, and their Improvement has been very visible. I add, that since Family Prayer is a Duty, we ought to be careful, lest we render our selves unfit for it, or incapable of it, by Conversation, or otherwise, when we are abroad.

3.) Social and publick Prayer Believers ought to practise. The Advantages arising from the conscientious Observance of this are more than, perhaps, are commonly thought of; hereby the Saints are mutually edified, comforted and strengthened, their Hearts are strongly cemented together in Love; and it has a wonderful Tendency to promote spiritual Affection to Divine Things. It is no small Part of the Commendation given by the Holy Ghost of the primitive Churches, that they practised this Duty; *they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's Doctrine and Fellowship, in breaking of Bread and in Prayers.*

Prayer of Jabez. 25

*ers*ⁱ. Such who are in Church-Fellowship are doubtless under Obligation jointly to confess their Imperfections, and intreat the Divine Blessing on the Word and Ordinances preached and administer'd among them, that their Souls may be *built up in their most holy Faith*, and to pray that *Peace may be within Zion's Walls, and Prosperity in all her Palaces*^k. There is at this Day a sorrowful Neglect of this Duty, which, among many other Things, makes it but too evident, that the Glory of our Religion is greatly eclipsed: May the Lord hasten a Revival of it, if it be his Will.

2. The Holy Spirit is the Director of the Saints in this Duty. On Account of the Assistance which he gives in the spiritual Performance of this Branch of Worship he is called, the *Spirit of Supplications*^l. *The Preparation of the Heart in Man* for this Duty is from God, as well as *the Answer of the Tongue*^m.

1. The Divine Spirit teaches us what to pray for: *We know not how to order our Speech by reason of Darkneſs*ⁿ. Our spiritual Ignorance renders it necessary for us, to depend on heavenly Influence and Guidance, when we draw nigh to God in Prayer, *for we know not what to pray for as we*

ⁱ Acts ii. 42.

^m Prov. xvi. 1.

^k Psal. cxxii. 7.

ⁿ Job xxxvii. 19.

^l Zech. xii. 10.

ought. Without Instruction from above we are incapable of a proper Discharge of this important Duty; *as we are not sufficient of our selves to think any Thing as of our selves*^o; we must needs be unequal to a Service of this Nature, wherein are required a profound Reverence of the Divine Majesty, an humble Opinion of our selves, spiritual Ideas of Things naturally unknown, fervent Desires of what we naturally are not disposed to seek after, and our Thoughts intently fixed on invisible Objects. Hence it is evident, that our spiritual Prayers are effected under a supernatural Influence; it is *the Spirit helpeth our Infirmities, and makes Intercession for us with Groanings which cannot be uttered*^p.

2. He excites our Desires after those Things which we pray for. Our Supplications consist only of a few cold and formal Petitions, unless our Affections are moved, and our Hearts ascend up to God, whose Name we invoke: It is the Heart he looks at; Lip-Service is far from being acceptable to him. In this Duty our Heart should always be the Guide to our Lips. What we express with our Tongues ought to be the unfeigned Desire of our Souls. Now as *we are bent to backsliding*^q it is ab-

^o 2 Cor. iii. 5.

^p Rom. viii. 26.

^q Hos. xi. 7.

olutely

solutely necessary that we should be divinely attracted: The Church was justly sensible of this when she thus expressed her self, *Draw me, we will run after thee*^r. The Necessity of such an heavenly Attraction and Influence is evident to every Believer, who finds himself naturally indisposed to Things of a spiritual Kind. The great Difference he experiences in his Soul, in his solemn Approaches to God, sufficiently convinces him, that all his Dependance ought to be on the Holy Ghost in his Addresses at the Divine Throne. Sometimes his Heart is cold, vain, and wandring, in the Beginning of this Duty; before the Conclusion, it may be, it is greatly enlarged, and is made *like to the Chariots of a willing People*^t; at other Seasons, when he imagines himself to be in a most suitable Frame for a Work of this Nature, and therefore chearfully engages in it, on a sudden his Affections cool, his Thoughts rove, and his Soul is greatly contracted: Wherefore he cannot but conclude, it is a vain Thing to attempt this Duty without a View to the gracious Operation and Aid of the Spirit of God.

3. He gives them Liberty and Freedom in Prayer. The People of God have always Liberty of Access to him through Je-

^r Cant. i. 4.

^t Chap. vi. 12.

fus Christ. Under every Temptation, Distress and Affliction, they may freely draw nigh to their heavenly Father, and spread their Case before him; but it is not at every Season they have Liberty in their Access to God; as the Psalmist was they all sometimes are, *shut up, and cannot come forth*^t: A Sense of their Guilt fills them with Shame, and almost forces them to Silence. It is only when the Spirit of Christ *takes of his Things, and shews them*^u to their Souls, that they have inward Freedom. A View, by Faith, of his Blood, Righteousness, Grace, and Intercession, are the Foundation of the Believer's Boldness; *In whom we have Boldness and Access, with Confidence, through the Faith of him*^w; and the Spirit of Grace is the Efficient, or Author, of that Freedom: *Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is Liberty*^x.

4. He causes us to hope for what we ask. The Exercise of Faith is necessary in this Duty. *Let him ask in Faith*^y is the Direction of the Apostle James. If we have no Expectation of receiving a Favour, upon an Application to a Friend, we are easily prevailed with to decline it; so, if we have no Hopes of obtaining a gracious Answer to our Prayers from God, our Inclination

^t Psal. lxxxviii. 8.

^u John xvi. 14.

^w Eph. iii. 12.

^x 2 Cor. iii. 17.

^y James i. 6.

nation to call upon him will sensibly abate. Without some Encouragement to expect a favourable Audience with God our Petitions to him will be very faint and cool; and therefore the Influence of the Spirit of Faith should always be desired by us when we engage in this sacred Duty, as what is absolutely needful to our comfortable Performance of it. With what Satisfaction, Liberty and Pleasure, as well as *Assurance of Faith*^z, do the Saints draw nigh to God, when the Holy Ghost powerfully applies the Divine Promises to their Souls; such as, *Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you*^a. *I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them*^b.

3. The Encouragements to this Duty are many, which, if they have a suitable Influence upon us, will cause us diligently to attend on it.

1. God's Relation to us. He hath been pleased, of his infinite Goodness, to make us his Children. *Behold, what Manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God*^c; which our Saviour proposes as an encouraging Motive to Prayer, *If ye then, being Evil, know how to give good Gifts to your Chil-*

^z Heb. x. 22.

^a Luke xi. 9.

^b Isa. xli. 21.

^c 1 John iii. 1.

dren, how much more shall your Father, which is in Heaven, give good Things to them that ask him^d. A tender Parent can't but be moved with the Intreaties of his Child under Distress, and be ready to give Relief if he is able. The Compassion of God, towards his People, infinitely exceeds the tenderest Bowels of any earthly Parent, and therefore we may call upon him with a *full Assurance* of obtaining all needful Supplies and Succour from him.

2. His Perfections may encourage us to engage in this important Duty.

(1.) His Omniscience. That God to whom we pray has a perfect Knowledge of the Frame and Desires of our Souls; which, as it ought to strike us with an humble Awe, when we come before him, so it may justly be improved, as a great Encouragement to us, in all our solemn Acts of Devotion, to hope for what we ask, however imperfectly we may express our selves to him: *He that searcheth the Hearts knoweth what is the Mind of the Spirit^e.*

(2.) The Omnipotence of God raises our Expectations of Relief in our Addresses to him. A real and intimate Friend may sympathize with us under Trouble, and be strongly inclined to free us from it, but it is often out of the Power of our best

^d Matth. vii. 11.

^e Rom. viii. 27.

Prayer of Jabez. 31

Friends to relieve us when in distress. This cannot be supposed of our heavenly Father, who is *able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think^f*. The Saints Help in God is like Water in a Fountain, ever flowing and never dry. Neither the Number, nor the Greatness of their Difficulties, should discourage them in a Dependence on omnipotent Power, because that makes hard Things easy, and pressing Things light.

(3.) His infinite Goodness. The Ability of a Person to extricate us out of great Troubles, without a Will to do it, affords us no hope of Relief. Now, as God is able to help us, be our Case ever so desperate in it self, his immense Favour will certainly induce him to regard, and seasonably succour us. The infinite Love, which is in his Heart towards his People, will always draw forth his Power to their Support, and speedy Deliverance out of threatening Dangers. What great Encouragement is this to wait upon him in Prayer!

3. The Promises God has made of hearing the Prayers of his People, may well encourage them closely to attend on this Duty: *Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear^g*.

^f Eph. iii. 20.

^g Isa. lxv. 24.

Divine Promises are sure and firm; *they are all yea and amen to the Glory^h of their Author.* This, among others, the Lord will inviolably keep, and therefore we ought never to be discouraged in praying to him, from an Apprehension that he will deny us a gracious Audience or Answer.

4. Christ's Intercession wonderfully encourages the Saints to address the Throne of Grace. His Regard to his People, now he is in Heaven, is the same that it was, when he was here on Earth; his Exaltation at God's right Hand makes no Alteration in his Affections towards Sinners; *He ever lives to make Intercession for themⁱ; he is their Advocate with the Father^k, and will thoroughly plead their Cause^l; he prays the Father for all necessary Grace to be communicated to his People here, and declares it to be his Will, that they should be with him for ever in Glory hereafter^m; and therefore they cannot, in their Petitions to God for spiritual Favours, exceed him in his Intercession for them.* O! what Encouragement is it to Faith in this Duty, that Christ continually intercedes with God to grant those Blessings to us, which we pray to him for, as what are requisite to our spiritual Advantage and Comfort. I go on,

^h 2 Cor. i. 20.

ⁱ Jer. l. 34.

^j Rom. viii. 34.

^m John xvii. 24.

^k 1. John ii. 1.

II. To consider the Favours he asked. They are various, and very great.

1st. He intreats that God would bless him: *O that thou wouldest bless me indeed.* It was real Happiness that he was desirous to obtain from God, who is the Fountain and Spring of all true Blessedness. No Creature can be happy in a State of Distance from him, or without Nearness to him, and Communion with him. The Happiness of guilty Creatures, as we are, consists in a Deliverance from that which renders us Unhappy, and in the Communication of special spiritual and eternal Blessings to us.

[1.] The Felicity of a fallen and guilty Creature consists in a Deliverance from that which renders him unhappy.

I. From Guilt contracted. Sin is the procuring Cause of all Misery and Infelicity; it is that which exposes us to Afflictions and Death in this World, and that draws down upon Sinners the Vengeance of God in the next. *The Wages of Sin is Death*, i. e. eternal Death, *as the Gift of God is eternal Life*ⁿ; and therefore there is no possibility of being Happy without a Discharge from Guilt. Those only are to be esteemed happy Persons, who obtain the Remission of their Sins by Christ's Blood:

ⁿ Rom. vi. 23.

Blessed are they whose Iniquities are forgiven, and whose Sins are covered. Blessed is the Man to whom the Lord will not impute Sin^o. Which Words plainly teach us, that Pardon is absolutely necessary to Happiness. Unless a Man's Sins are forgiven him, whatever his outward Circumstances may be, he is a miserable Person; on the contrary, such who are discharged of their Guilt are truly happy, how much soever they are afflicted and despised in this Life.

2. It necessarily supposes a Freedom from Condemnation. Sin subjects us to a Curse: *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all Things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them^p.* God, as a Lawgiver, pronounces dreadful Menaces against guilty Creatures as such; nor is it possible to escape the Malediction denounced, without an Interest in Christ's Satisfaction; that, indeed, effectually secures us from it: *There is no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus^q.* A Charge of Guilt and Condemnation are inseparable. If a Man is under the Imputation of Sin he is also condemned; but if he is acquitted of his Crimes, by virtue of Christ's Blood, he is not liable to any Divine Threatenings.

^o Rom. iv. 7, 8.

^p Gal. iii. 10.

^q Rom. viii. 1.

3. The Happiness of guilty Creatures supposes a Security from Divine Anger, which their Sins have exposed them to. Every Act of Transgression against the Law subjects us to the awful Displeasure of God; and therefore it is the greatest Unhappiness to lie under a Charge of Guilt. Eternal Misery hangs over such whose Sins are not remitted; but those who obtain a Discharge of their Guilt through Jesus Christ, are eternally secured from the Stroke of Divine Justice; *being justified by Christ's Blood we shall be saved from Wrath through him*.

[2.] Our Felicity is inclusive of the Communication of all special, spiritual and eternal Blessings.

1. Adoption, or being made Sons to God. This unspeakable Honour and Dignity is conferred upon us who are vile and sinful *Creatures*; *having predestinated us to the Adoption of Children by Jesus Christ, to himself*. By Virtue of this Relation to God we are constituted Heirs of him; *If Children then Heirs, Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Christ*. It is an inexpressible Happiness to be interested in this glorious Privilege; for hereby we are entitled to Grace and Glory, or are made Heirs of all that God is, and has, who is the Fountain of real Felicity.

^r Rom. v. 9.

^r Eph. i. 5.

^r Rom. viii. 17.

2. Justification is another Branch of true Blessedness. The Righteousness of Christ being put upon a Person recommends him to, and gives him eternal Acceptance with God. Now such who have the Divine Approbation must necessarily be concluded Happy, according to *David*, and the Apostle, who quotes his Words, *Even as David also describeth the Blessedness of the Man, to whom the Lord imputeth Righteousness without Works*^u. This gives us a proper and just Claim to everlasting Happiness; *That being justified by his Grace we might be made Heirs, according to the Hope of eternal Life*^w. Those who are justified have an indisputable and unalienable Title to all the Glory of Heaven, and shall certainly be brought to the Enjoyment of it: *Moreover, whom he did predestinate them he also called, and whom he called them he also justified, and whom he justified them he also glorified*^x. These Benefits of Adoption and Justification ensure to us Grace here, and Glory hereafter.

3. Regeneration and Sanctification. We are naturally *dead in*^y, and under the *Dominion of Sin*^z, and are also in Bondage to Satan, which is a very unhappy Condition; but God of his *rich Mercy quickens*

^u Rom. iv. 6.^y Eph. ii. 1.^w Titus iii. 7.^z Rom. vi. 14.^x Rom. viii. 30.

us^a, or communicates spiritual Life to our Souls, and delivers us *from the Power of Darkness*, and translates us *into the Kingdom of his dear Son*^b; he implants a Principle of Holiness in us who are naturally *carnal and sold under Sin*^c; devoid of any Inclination to, or Ability to perform spiritual Good: *God hath saved us, and called us with an holy Calling*^d. This Work is the Beginning of everlasting Life: It is Glory begun in us; *he that believeth hath everlasting Life*^e; that is to say, in the Seed or Beginning of it. And this Work shall be cherished and carried on by the same Hand that formed it, notwithstanding all Opposition from Sin within us, and from Satan, or the World without us; *being confident of this very Thing, that he which hath begun a good Work in you, will perform it until the Day of Christ*^f. Those who are the Subjects of true Grace are at some Times admitted to sweet Communion and Fellowship with God and Christ: *Truly, says the Apostle John, our Fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*^g; which fills them with far greater Satisfaction, Joy and Pleasure, than can possibly arise from the Enjoyment of all sublunary Things: *Thou hast put Joy and*

^a Eph. ii. 1.^b Col. i. 13.^c Rom. vii. 14.^d 2 Tim. i. 9.^e John vi. 47.^f Phil. i. 6.^g 1 John i. 3.

Gladness in my Heart more than in the Time that their Corn and their Wine increasedⁿ. The largest Affluence of the Things of this Life is not comparable to a Prospect of, and Communion with God through a Mediator.

4. Perfect and consummate Happiness consists in the eternal Enjoyment of God in Heaven, which it is the *Will* of Christ, *all that the Father hath given him* should be brought to enjoy; wherein are several Things to be observed.

1.) The Removal of all that Darkness and Ignorance which at present attends the Understandings of the Saints. Through Divine Illumination they are now enabled to form some Ideas of heavenly Things, but their Conceptions thereof are low and imperfect, by reason of that Darkness which remains in them; hence says the Apostle, *We know in part, and prophesy in part.* Perhaps never had any Servant of God a more clear, distinct, and extensive Knowledge of Divine Mysteries, than this great Apostle had, if ever any were equal to him therein, and yet he acknowledges, that his Acquaintance with *the deep Things of God*, was but partial and imperfect, *when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done awayⁱ.* The Excel-

ⁿ Psal. iv. 7.

ⁱ 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.

lency of the human Nature principally consists in its rational Powers, or a Capacity to form Conceptions of God, and what is good. Knowledge therefore, with suitable Affections, is our chiefest Glory. If Knowledge is to be esteemed more or less excellent, as it hath Objects lower, or more sublime, certainly that of which God is the Object must be accounted infinitely the Best. The greatest Skill in the Secrets of Nature, is to be valued only as it strikes us with a Reverence of its infinitely great Author, and induces us to love him, who, it is manifest from his Works, is a Being of immense Goodness and unlimited Power. In this Philosophy is exceedingly defective; 'tis only the Revelation of Salvation to lost Creatures by Jesus Christ, that is suited to conquer the Rebellion of our Hearts; and in this there is a fuller Display of the Benignity, Wisdom, Power and Purity of God, than appears in the Works of Creation or Providence. For which Reason it may justly be concluded, that the Knowledge of evangelical Doctrines far transcends in Excellence and Worth, the most extensive Acquaintance with natural Things; these are the refined Subjects about which the Faith of a Believer is now conversant, and which he shall eternally contemplate upon, and form perfect Conceptions of, in the
the

the blessed State above ; then shall he *know even as he also is known*^k, and see his Covenant-God *as he is*^l: This is a Happiness which infinitely exceeds the most raised Ideas our present State admits of.

2.) No Perverseness, or bias to Evil, will then attend the Will. Believers are Persons possessed of Flesh as well as Spirit: Whilst they are in this mortal State, they *are bent to backsliding*^m; the *Law of their Members* too frequently prevails against that of *their Minds*, and brings them into Captivity to the *Law of Sin*ⁿ, which is in their Members. The Disquietude and Grief which the Deceitfulness, Strength, and Motions of Lusts within them, often occasion to their Souls, are not to be expressed, they can't but say, *O wretched Persons that we are, who shall deliver us from the Body of this Death*^o; they groan within themselves, and with longing Expectation wait for the Adoption, to wit, the Redemption of their Body^p. In the future State they shall enjoy a perfect Freedom from all Impurity and Corruption. As soon as they put off their mortal Bodies their Souls will be perfected in Glory. When no sinful Thoughts will ever arise within them to their Disturbance and

^k 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

^l 1 John iii. 2.

^m Hof. xi. 7.

ⁿ Rom. vii. 23.

^o Ver. 24.

^p Rom. viii. 23.

Grief,

Prayer of Jabez. 41

Grief, as now they do, even at such Times when they most desire to be delivered from them, the whole Heart will then be intently fixed on God and Christ, and a holy Flame of Love to their dear Saviour, will be eternally glowing in their Breasts, who that considers the Happiness of such a State, can be without earnest Breathings after the Possession of it? May God, of his infinite Goodness, prepare us unworthy Creatures for it, and safely conduct us to it.

3.) No Corruption will then remain in our Affections, which at present are very impure. Now we are apt to *set them on Things on the Earth*^a: Although we are convinced that invisible Objects infinitely better deserve our Regard, yet through the Imperfection that attends us, the Things of Time and Sense deeply affect us, and engross far too large a Share of our Thoughts, Desires and Affections; but then we shall be entirely delivered from all such Rovings that break our Peace, and damp our spiritual Joys in this Life; no irregular Motions, or disorderly Passions, will then find any room in our Hearts, but we shall for ever be transported with rapturous Views of the dazzling Glories which shine in the Mediator's adoreable Person.

^a Col. iii. 2.

4.) No Discomposure of Mind will attend us in the heavenly State. Here our Souls are ruffled and perplexed by various Causes; by none so much, as by the Sin which dwells in us; but that we shall be completely delivered from, when we enter into that pure Place, where *nothing* is admitted *that defiles*^r. The Disappointments, Losses and Afflictions which occur in this State of Uncertainty, give us great and frequent Uneasiness; but when once we are arrived to the happy Shore of the other World, no Storms will ever any more at all arise upon us, or tempestuous Waves of Trouble overwhelm us. Now we are attended with spiritual Darkness and Desertions, Clouds interpose between God and our Souls, and hide his Face from us; but when we are above we shall always behold him in his Son; nothing shall then intercept or prevent the Rays of his Favour from shining upon us. Those happy Regions above are all Serenity and Peace, and every joyful Inhabitant there, possesses eternal and undisturbed Rest and Tranquillity; all Sorrow is eternally banished from that Place; no Signs of Grief will ever appear in the Faces of those who are in Heaven, for *God will wipe away all Tears from their Eyes*^s.

^r Rev. xxi. 27.^s Chap. vii. 17.

Chap. xxi. 4.

5.) That is a State of uninterrupted Communion with God. His spiritual Presence that is enjoyed by Believers here, is attended with an Agreeableness and Pleasure which rises far above our Expression; but yet it is infinitely below the Delight that springs from his immediate Presence in Heaven, where there is *a Fulness of Joy, and at whose right Hand are Rivers of increasing Pleasures for evermore*¹. The Fellowship which the Saints have with their heavenly Father in this State is often interrupted by Sin, Unbelief, and Temptations; but that which will subsist between God and them above, will not be broke by any of these Things: They will be eternally swallowed up in the boundless Ocean of his everlasting Love.

6.) Their Views of him will then be clear, permanent, and abiding. Now they see him by Faith, and beholding *the Glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same Image from Glory to Glory*. But these Prospects are inconstant, seldom and short; then, as they will be clear, distinct and full, not *as through a Glass darkly*², so they will be invariable and never ceasing. No small Part of our Happiness hereafter, will consist in viewing the Glory of our Redeemer, who is exalted at God's

¹ Psal. xvi. 11.

² 2 Cor. iii. 18. 1 Epist. xiii. 12.

right Hand. *Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me, that they may behold my Glory^w.* The Pleasure which will attend this View of our dear Saviour, as *crowned with Glory and Honour^x*, far transcends our Comprehension at present. It must certainly be an exquisite Delight to the Saints, to see their Redeemer, who once wore a Crown of *Thorns^y* for their sakes, have a never fading Crown of Glory on his Head; and to view him, who was once clothed with Shame on their Account, invested with shining Robes of Majesty and Light.

7.) They will receive inconceivable Glory from Christ. The Father *has given him Power over all Flesh, that he might give eternal Life to as many as are given him^z.* He will always be the Medium of God's communicating Favours to us, which is greatly to his Honour. Our Glory will very much consist in a Conformity to Christ. It was this God resolved upon in Predestination; *He predestinated us to become conformed to the Image of his Son^a.* And this seems to comprehend the Utmost of that Glory which God designed to bring us to the Enjoyment of; the Greatness of which we are unable fully to

^w John xvii. 24.

^x Heb. ii. 9.

^y Matth. xxvii. 29.

^z John xvii. 2.

^a Rom. viii. 29.

Prayer of Jabez. 45

conceive of or describe. Since the Happiness of the future State will be thus surprizingly great, it is not to be wondered at, that the Believer, in the Exercise of a lively Faith upon it, cries out, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly*^b. Persons appointed to this State must be accounted really happy ones.

From this Petition of *Jabez* we may easily collect, that his Heart was chiefly set upon those Things which are of a solid and durable Nature; he prays for Blessings that out-last Time, and which would accompany him beyond the Grave. And thus it becomes us all, to pray for a View of our Discharge from Guilt, Security from the Law's Curse, and from eternal Vengeance, which our Sins render us justly deserving of; and also, that we may be meetened for the Enjoyment of God and Christ, and be safely brought to that Happiness, when with respect to us Time shall be no more.

2dly. His second Petition is, *and enlarge my Coast*. It is probable that his Possession or Inheritance was too strait and narrow, not equal to the Number of his Family, which drew this Supplication from him. This was the Case with the *Children of Dan*, who were obliged to en-

^b Rev. xxii. 20.

large their Coast by Violence, as we are informed in the Book of *Joshua*^c. It appears by this Branch of this Prayer, that *Jabez* considered God as the Disposer of all Things, as he who fixes *the Bounds of our Habitations*, as his Protector, and as his beneficent Benefactor.

1. He considered God as the Disposer of all Things. He framed the Universe, and gave Being to every Thing that exists; *he is the Creator of the Ends of the Earth*^d. The whole Frame of Nature is dependent on him, and supported by him, and therefore every Thing is under his Direction, and at his Disposal: *The Earth is the Lord's, and the Fulness thereof; the World, and they that dwell therein*^e. The almighty and universal Creator, it is highly reasonable to suppose, has all Things under his Management and Influence. It is irrational to conceive, that he who made the World doth not govern it. Whatever God created doubtless he rules. Divine Providence is conversant about the minutest Parts of the Creation; *a Sparrow, two of which are sold for a Farthing, doth not fall to the Ground without the Permission of our heavenly Father*^f. We may therefore strongly conclude, that God exerci-

^c Chap. xix. 47.

^d Isa. xl. 28.

^e Psal. xxiv. 1.

^f Matth. x. 29.

ses a special Care about, and Rule over Man, who is the Chief of the lower Creation. The Commencement of our Being, the Circumstances of our Life, whether they be high or low, the Time and Manner of our Death, are all under Divine Direction.

2. *Jabez* considered God as his Protector. His humble Application to God for the enlarging of his Coast, may direct us to conclude, that he was sensible of the Necessity of Divine Protection, to preserve him in a safe and quiet Possession of what was his present Property. If we are persuaded, that the Increase of our temporal Favours is from God, we cannot doubt of our holding whatever we may enjoy, by virtue of his governing Will. The peaceable Enjoyment of what Providence has made our own, is owing to the watchful Care, and powerful Protection of the great God; *Safety is of the Lord*^s. He causes *the Needy*, that is to say, such as are poor, weak, and defenceless, *to lie down in safety*^h. The Psalmist expresses his deep Sense of Divine Preservation in these Words, *I will both lay me down in Peace, and sleep, for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety*ⁱ.

^s Prov. xxi. 31.

^h Isa. xiv. 30.

ⁱ Psal. iv. 8.

3. He acknowledged the Lord to be his bountiful Benefactor. None can suitably apply to God for an Addition to their temporal Estate, but such who believe his universal Providence, and know that what they already enjoy, be it less or more, is the Beneficence of the supreme Being. A right Application to the Lord for such an Increase of our Substance as we apprehend to be necessary, carries in it a just Sense of all the Accommodations of Life, being his Gifts, and what we are wholly undeserving of. Believers, when they humbly and spiritually look up to their heavenly Father, for the Communication of what is needful for them, gratefully acknowledge it is he *who giveth them richly all Things to enjoy*^k.

This Petition gives us a proper Occasion to enquire, whether it be lawful to desire more than we possess, if our necessary Wants are supplied? or, if having *daily Bread*, we may be justified in desiring more? I apprehend there are some Things, which, if they attend those Desires, render them absolutely unlawful; and that there are different Views which may make such Desires strictly justifiable.

Those Things which, I conceive, render these Desires unlawful, are as follow:

^k 1 Tim. vi. 17.

1.) A Diffidence and Distrust of the continued Care of Divine Providence about us. It is too commonly seen, that after Men have had a long Experience of the Goodness of God discovered in providing for them, they sink into a lamentable Distrust of the Continuance of his beneficent Regard to them, and foolishly propose to defend themselves from Penury, by advancing their Circumstances to such a Height as may be thought to raise them to an Independance on Providence; that is to say, they diligently attempt to lay up so much Store by them as they think will be sufficient to prevent their ever being Necessitous. Such a Conduct is exceedingly blameable; for, besides the Uncertainty of human Life, which ought to check all such anxious Desires, what Reason can be assigned, why we should scruple that the Providence which has suitably supplied us for thirty, forty, or fifty Years, will not take the same Care of us the short Time we may longer continue in Life? But oftentimes to such an excessive Pitch does this Temper arise in many, that they entirely lose all agreeable Relish of those Mercies they are favoured with, because they are disappointed in their Views of this low and diffident Kind. This covetous Disposition is very unbecoming those who profess Faith in Christ; it is what he se-

verely censures, as the Effect of Unbelief, or of a weak Faith: *Shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little Faith? Therefore take no Thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed (for after all these Things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these Things*¹. Having Food and Raiment we ought to be therewith content, and not distress our selves with Thoughts of what we have no just Reason to fear, viz. the want of Divine Beneficence towards us.

2.) If Ambition and Pride give rise to, or cherish these Desires, we cannot acquit our selves of Guilt in this matter. I imagine that Persons of ambitious and aspiring Views, are under a strong Temptation too eagerly to pursue the enriching of themselves; to such the Want of Respect and Honour from others is intolerable. And as Riches frequently recommend a Man in the room of good Sense, strong Parts, Affability, and strict Probity, except to the *judicious Few*; it is no wonder, that some Men are seen to labour after the amassing of Wealth together, who are not able to make Pretensions to Honour (but can't be easy without it) above what others in lower Life may claim

¹ Matth. vi. 31, 32.

by the Qualifications and Virtues which adorn their Mind and Conduct. Men of this Cast cannot patiently bear, that any should exceed, if equal them, in Gaiety and Grandeur; but are far from imitating such as are superior to them in the brighter Excellencies that beautify a Person.

3.) If we aim at enriching our selves with a View to indulge a sensual Appetite, we are highly culpable. Ease, Luxury, and Wantonness, are Vices that often captivate Persons of plentiful Fortunes; numerous Temptations attend those of a superior Rank, which such that are below them are not subject to. The Pleasure that arises from the Abundance of Wealth is far from over-ballancing the many Dangers to which it exposes Men: A thorough Conviction of which caused *Agur* wisely to decline seeking of it; he knew that the Corruption of our Nature prompts us to Pride and Insolence, if we are in elevated Circumstances, as it tempts us to Actions fraudulent and unjust when we are in the Reverse; which drew this Prayer from him, who, perhaps in this Particular is imitated but by few, *Give me neither Poverty nor Riches, but feed me with Food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal, and take the Name of*

my God in vain^m. If we desire to be rich, from an Inclination to gratify our carnal Affections, Providence is infinitely kind in denying us what would be unspeakably to our Disadvantage: *Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your Lusts*ⁿ.

4.) When our Endeavours this Way are accompanied with oppressive Designs towards others, we are guilty of a very great Evil. Oppression is a cruel and inhuman Vice; but many whose Circumstances enable them to it, seldom discover the Want of an Inclination to practise it. *Do not rich Men oppress you*^o? says the Apostle *James*. The Heart of Man is so abominably wicked, as to abuse that to the Detriment of others, which he ought to improve to their Assistance and Advantage. *But thine Eyes and thine Heart are not but for thy Covetousness, and for to shed innocent Blood, and for Oppression, and for Violence to do it*^p. Too many, whose Ability renders them capable of relieving the Distressed and Necessitous, are so far from Christian Generosity, as to increase the Poverty of their Dependants, by abating them of their Wages, without any manner

^m Prov. xxx. 8, 9.

ⁿ James iv. 3.

^o Chap. ii. 6.

^p Jer. xxii. 17.

of Necessity, but merely from an insatiable Desire after adding to their own Wealth. I can't tell, whether the Frequency of this may not have so far blinded the Minds of some Men, as to make them think it no Crime: If any Check is given by the Conscience for such a Conduct, it is presently silenced by this pitiful and shameless Excuse, *If I do it not others will*. It would be well if those Words were seriously considered by such, *I will be a swift Witness against those that oppress the Hireling in his Wages*^a. Let not any think to join with others in Sin, and imagine that they shall not share with them in the Punishment.

If any of these Things attend our Desires of enlarging our Treasure, those Desires proceed from a low and base Principle.

There are some very justifiable Reasons that may be mentioned in favour of such Desires, and which sufficiently defend us in cherishing of them.

(1.) That we may be able to assist others who are in want. This is a Duty incumbent upon us all; we are required *to do good to all Men, especially to them who are of the Household of Faith*^r. In this we ought to imitate the Beneficence of our heavenly Father, who causes *his Sun to*

^a Mal. iii. 5.

^r Gal. vi. 10.

rise on the Evil and on the Good; and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust[†]. Now, if we use our Diligence to render our selves capable of this Charity and Benevolence, it is to our Commendation; to this we are directed, *Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his Hands the Thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth*[†]. We are under Obligation to be industrious, with a View to the Service of our Fellow-Creatures, but more especially, that we may enable our selves to relieve poor and distressed Saints. As in all other Things, so in this, perhaps our treacherous Hearts too frequently deceive us; we may sometimes think, that we would be extensively charitable, if our Circumstances were but once advanced to such a Height; an eager Desire of which holds our hand, and prevents our present Liberality; and if so, we may be assured, that our Desire of encreasing our Stock is not for the sake of others, but wholly for our selves; or, that it is a selfish Principle which governs us.

(2.) It is lawful to desire an Increase of our Substance, with a View to our Improvement in useful Knowledge. There is a great Variety of Subjects that well de-

[†] Matth. vi. 45.

[†] Eph. iv. 28.

serve our diligent Study, in order to any considerable Acquaintance with which, such Helps are necessary, that cannot be obtained without great Expence; and therefore Persons in low Circumstances, though they may have an excellent Genius, or their Intellectuals may be such as fit them for sublime Studies, yet their Situation of Affairs does not furnish them with suitable Opportunities, and necessary Advantages, for that Improvement of which they are capable. In the Opinion of *Solomon*, an Advancement in Knowledge is far preferable to the Increase of Riches. *How much better is it to get Wisdom than Gold; and to get Understanding rather to be chosen than Silver* ^u. The Works of Nature are very worthy of our diligent Enquiries, for those Discoveries which are to be made of the Order, Dependence, Beauty, and Harmony of natural Things, may justly lead us to adore the great Creator, whose infinite Wisdom and Power will visibly appear to us in all our Disquisitions of this kind. But the gracious Design of the Salvation of Sinners, or evangelical Mysteries, best deserve our assiduous Studies, because the Divine Perfections are more eminently displayed therein, and our dearest Interest is most nearly concerned in our

^u Prov. xvi. 16.

Acquaintance with those heavenly Things. Now it is lawful to desire an Increase of our temporal Substance, in order to capacitate us for Improvement (by obtaining of necessary Helps) in such valuable Knowledge.

(3.) We may lawfully desire an Enlargement of our Treasure, out of a Regard to the Interest of Religion: The Promotion of Christ's Kingdom, and the Propagation of his Gospel, challenge our warmest Zeal. If we have a deep Sense of the many Obligations we are under to Christ, we shall certainly be influenced to contribute all we can to the Support and Spreading of his Cause in the World: We cannot neglect, and be indifferent towards his Interest, without involving our selves in Guilt. Besides, a proper Use of what Providence entrusts us with, is very likely to be attended with a Blessing. It is to be questioned, whether Liberality tends to impoverish us, but we are assured, that *to withhold more than is meet tends to Poverty*^w. *Honour the Lord with thy Substance, and with the First-Fruits of all thine Increase, so shall thy Barns be filled with Plenty, and thy Presses shall burst out with new Wine*^x. Now, though these Views may justify us, in desiring an Addition to

^w Prov. xi. 24.

^x Chap. iii. 9, 10.

our temporal Riches, yet our Application to God for it ought to be with entire Submission to his Will, as considering, that he knows what is most proper for us, and best understands how we should use what we might be entrusted with. For my Part, I freely confess, that I apprehend Riches are no farther desireable than as they subserve these valuable Ends mentioned; and what Account those will be able to give hereafter, who are possessed of them, and do not improve them to these Purposes, they will do well seriously to consider. I imagine it must be much such a one as that Servant gave, who *laid up his Pound in a Napkin*^y, and neglected to occupy it.

3dly. The third Branch of this Prayer is, and, *That thine Hand might be with me.* By the Hand of God may be intended his powerful Grace; as it is in these Words, *The Hand of the Lord was with them, and a great Number believed*^z; which God promises to turn upon his People; *and I will turn mine Hand upon the little ones*^a. These Words are expressive of God's gracious and effectual Influence in and upon his Saints. Jabez was sensible that this was necessary to his Assistance, Protection, Guidance, and Consolation, and therefore intreats that he might be favoured therewith.

^y Luke xix. 20.

^z Acts xi. 21.

^a Zech. xiii. 7.

1. The Hand of God's Love and Favour is necessary to our Aid and Assistance. We are unable to excite, or put into Exercise, and maintain the Vigor of those Graces that are formed in us, which yet are very needful to the Comfort and Joy of our Souls. Our spiritual Vivacity and Liveliness is wholly dependant on Christ, *with whom is the Fountain of Life*^b. As Branches in the natural Vine cannot bear Fruit without a continued Communication of Nourishment from it, so Believers, who are Branches of Christ, *the true Vine*, cannot bring forth any spiritual Fruit to God's Glory, unless they have a constant Supply of Grace from him; *without me ye can do nothing*^c. Again, they are unequal to a spiritual Performance of any Duty, without Divine Assistance: Their religious Exercises are gone through in a very cold, dull, and heavy Manner, if heavenly Influences are with-held, a Sense of which drew this Request from the Church, *Draw me*^d. Various Temptations attend the Saints; and their corrupt Part is very ready to comply therewith. Nor are they, of themselves, able to repel the Force of the least which may befall them. All our Ability to withstand Satan's urgent Solicitations to Evil is derived from Christ, who

^b Psal. xxxvi. 9.^c John xv. 5.^d Cant. i. 4.

is our *Strength*, as well as *Righteousness*^c. A Multitude of Snares surround us in this sinful World, which is, as it were, a *Land of Deserts and Pits*^f; and therefore supernatural Assistance is absolutely requisite to our comfortable Walking, where we can't but be sensible that manifold Difficulties and Dangers are before us. Besides, many Afflictions seize upon us while we are here, which are *not joyous but grievous*^g, though they yield the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness in the End. How necessary it is that Christ's *left Hand* should be under our *Head*^h, to keep us from sinking, those fully know, over whom the surging Waves of deep Distresses have rolled.

2. Omnipotent Grace is necessarily required to our Protection. It is not to be imagined, that we are furnished with a Power sufficient to defend our selves against the violent Assaults of that *roaring Lion*, Satan, *who walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*ⁱ. The treacherous and powerful Enemies which are within our own Breasts would certainly prevail against us, and involve us in endless Destruction, if Divine Power did not stand engaged for our Defence. Our Ruin would be inevitable, if Christ was not as well a *Shield* to

^c Isa. xlv. 24.
^h Cant. ii. 6.

^f Jer. ii. 6.
ⁱ 1 Pet. i. 8.

^g Heb. xii. 13.

defend us, as a *Sun*^k to enlighten us: So great is our Danger, which arises from the *Deceit* and *Power* of Sin in our Hearts. The Number, Malice, and Rage of the Saints Adversaries in the World, would strike them with the greatest Consternation, were they left to defend themselves; it is only the Knowledge of their having an impregnable Place of Defence to retreat to in all Dangers, which bears up their Courage and Fortitude of Mind. *The Name of the Lord is a strong Tower; the Righteous runneth into it and is safe*^l. It is by the Power of God alone that they are kept through Faith unto Salvation^m.

3. The *Skilfulness* of God's Handⁿ is very needful to our *Guidance* and *Direction*. We are full as defective in Wisdom as in Strength; *The Way of Man is not in himself; it is not in Man that walketh to direct his Steps*^o. We are often at as great a Loss how to conduct our selves under difficult Circumstances, as we are unable to act the Part which becomes us; hence the Psalmist entirely depended on Direction from above; *Thou shalt guide me with thy Counsel*^r. The true Knowledge of what is our Duty is a Gift from Heaven, as well as the Ability to perform it. *Teach me to do*

^k Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

^l Prov. xviii. 10.

^m 1 Pet. i. 5.

ⁿ Psal. lxxviii. 72.

^o Jer. x. 23.

^r Psal. lxxiii. 24.

Prayer of Jabez. 61

thy Will^a, is a Petition suitable to the Condition of us all. The Path in which we should walk is frequently out of our View; we know not where or how to take one Step. So far as our Actions are agreeable to the Character of good Men they are directed by God; *the Steps of a good Man are ordered by the Lord*^r. We should turn aside, and eternally wander, if a gracious God did not say to us, when we *decline to the right Hand, or to the left, this is the Way, walk ye in it*^f.

4. The kind Influences of God upon us are necessary to our Consolation. All our spiritual Comfort takes its Rise from rich Grace, and is effected by the *good Hand of God upon us*^t: Hence the Lord is stiled *the God of Consolation*^u. Believers never have any solid Peace and Joy but when they are favoured with the Smiles of their heavenly Father: He only can *comfort them* when they *are cast down*^v. This he graciously promises to do for them, *As one whom his Mother comforteth so will I comfort you*^w. And this his free Promise he effectually makes good, by shewing to them the *Immutability of his Counsel*, concerning their Salvation, which he has *confirmed by an Oath, That by two immutable Things, wherein it is impossible for him to lye, they*

^a Psal. cxliiii. 10.

^r Psal. xxxvii. 23.

^f Isa. xxx. 21.

^t Neh. ii. 8.

^u Rom. xv. 5.

^v 2 Cor. vii. 6.

^w Isa. lxvi. 13.

might have a strong Consolation *. Through a Contraction of Guilt they sometimes are deprived of their spiritual Joys, their Graces grow languid, and their Hearts are exceedingly troubled: This was *David's* Case, when he thus expressed himself to his God, *Restore unto me the Joy of thy Salvation* †. What he earnestly desired on his own Account, God will indulge his distressed Children with, notwithstanding their Backslidings from him. *I have seen his Ways, and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore Comforts to him, and to his Mourners* ‡.

4thly. *Jabez* prays to be kept from Evil: *And that thou wouldst keep me from Evil*. He urges a Reason for this Petition, it is this, *That it may not grieve me*. I shall,

(1.) Consider the Request.

(2.) Observe the Argument he pleads for obtaining the Favour he asked.

(1.) I am to consider the Request, which is, *And that thou wouldst keep me from Evil*. In this Branch of his Prayer are three Things to be enquired into.

[1.] What is designed by Evil.

[2.] What is supposed by *Jabez* his applying to God to be kept from it.

[3.] How the Lord keeps his People from Evil.

* Heb. vi. 17, 18.

† Psal. li. 12.

‡ Isa. lvii. 18.

[1.] Evil sometimes designs Penalty; thus in these Words, *I will bring Evil upon them which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me I will not hearken unto them*^a. In other Places it intends Affliction; as in these Words, *and comforted him over all the Evil, i. e. Affliction that the Lord had brought upon him*^b. All Punishment is Affliction; but all Affliction is not Penalty. *Job's* Affliction had nothing of a penal Nature in it. Evil is elsewhere taken for Sin; as here, *Ye that love the Lord hate Evil*^c, i. e. *Sin*. This I apprehend to be principally designed at least; in this Place, under our Consideration. It is not improbable but *Jabez* might have in View Afflictions, and desire to be delivered from them, which are grievous in their Nature. But I imagine it was Sin that he chiefly had Respect to, and was desirous of being kept from. A very evil Thing it is.

(1.) It is Evil in its Nature. It is contrary to God; *It's the abominable Thing that he hates*^d. It is a Transgression of the Divine Law; *Whosoever committeth Sin, says the Apostle John, transgresseth also the Law, for Sin is the Transgression of the Law*^e. In sinning we act in direct Op-

^a Jer. xi. 11.

^b Job xlii. 11.

^c Psal. xcvi. 10.

^d Jer. xli. 4.

^e John iii. 4.

position to the Will of God, despise his Authority, and strike at his Government; who therefore will ever be able fully to describe the disagreeable Nature of this hideous Monster?

(2.) Since Sin is thus vile in its Nature it can't be imagined to be good in its Effects. The Consequences arising from it have been fatal to all chargeable with it. Man's Apostasy from God, or his first Breach of the Law, involved us all in Misery and Woe. By that Sin the Rectitude and Purity of our Nature was lost, and we are become polluted, and prone to all Iniquity. Besides, it is Sin that exposes us to the Curse and Condemnation of the Law, and renders us liable to God's eternal Vengeance; *for which Things sake* (i. e. the Lusts mentioned above) *cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of Disobedience*^f. That is the cursed Fountain from which all penal Evils spring here, and from whence everlasting Destruction will arise hereafter; eternal *Death is the Wages*^g of it, or that is properly demerited by it: Its Nature therefore must be inconceivably vile and abominable.

[2.] *Jabez* having a proper Sense of the evil and odious Nature of Sin, applies to the Lord to be kept from it. Thus all

^f Col. iii. 6.

^g Rom. vi. 23.

Prayer of Jabez. 65

Believers do; as *David*, who expresses himself after this Manner, *Cleanse thou me from secret Faults; keep back thy Servant also from presumptuous Sins, let them not have Dominion over me*^h. Christ gives us Advice to this in his Directory for Prayer, *Lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil*ⁱ. The Necessity of a Dependance on God for Preservation from the Commission of Sin, thus appears.

I. Sin dwells in every Believer. 'Tis true, the Saints are born from above^k, or a Principle of Holiness is implanted in them^l, which influences them to desire a perfect Conformity to Christ; but their Experience sufficiently convinces them, that it is far from being attainable in this Life: Whoever shall conceit that he hath attained to Perfection already, will give but too evident a Proof of his being under a dreadful *Delusion*; *If we say that we have no Sin, we deceive our selves, and the Truth is not in us*^m. There is a carnal and fleshly, as well as a spiritual Part in every Child of God; contrary and jarring Principles reside in his Breast; *The Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other*ⁿ. According to the carnal Part

^h Psal. xix. 13.

ⁱ Matth. vi. 13.

^k John i. 13.

^l 2 Tim. i. 9.

^m 1 John i. 8.

ⁿ Gal. v. 17.

he is bent to Backsliding^o: The natural Turn and Bias of his Will is to Evil; hence the Apostle thus complains, *In me (that is in my Flesh) dwelleth no good Thing^p*. The Danger we are in of being overcome by the Deceitfulness and Power of indwelling Corruption, is far greater than many, who would be esteemed Christians, seem to be aware of. It is difficult to determine, whether the Deceit, or the Strength of Sin, is the greatest. Its Deceitfulness appears many Ways: It often hides the Viciousity and sad Consequences of a sinful Action, to which the Will is solicited to yield, and endeavours to keep the Thoughts, wholly exercised about the Pleasures, or imaginary Advantages that will attend it: It offers many Things to extenuate the Nature of a Crime, and strongly insists upon it, that there cannot be any great Harm in indulging such a particular Desire that may arise in the Soul; that at least some Advances may be made towards what our carnal Affections are desirous of, without the Contraction of any great Guilt. Thus by gradual and slow Steps, if the Grace of God doth not prevent, it gains considerable Ground in our Hearts. The Power and Prevalence of it is equal to its Treachery; this the Apostle sets forth by

^o Hof. xi. 7.

^p Rom. vii. 23.

calling it a *Law*, and a *Law* that wars against the *Law* of the *Mind*; and, as he observes, not without Success, for it brings us into *Captivity*^a; or prevails against us, which, if we duly consider, we must allow it is highly necessary for us, earnestly to pray to God, to be kept from Evil.

2. We are liable to a great Variety of Temptations. Satan is an unwearied Adversary, and hath had long Experience in tempting of Men; whence it is reasonable to conclude, that he may be capable of guessing, what our Constitutions principally incline us to, or what Temptations are most likely to prevail with us: It is not to be questioned, but he diligently considers our Age, Circumstances in Life, natural Inclinations, and the different Occasions to Sin which may turn up, and thereby takes us at great Disadvantages, and without a *Standard is lift up against him* we are carried away as with an impetuous and violent *Flood*^r. The Craft of this *old Serpent*^t, in soliciting us to the Commission of Evil, is as great as the Sting, that attends his accusing us of those Sins which we have committed. His Subtlety is not unequal to his Poison, and therefore it becomes us to depend on Christ for Preservation from, and Aid under his Temptations,

^a Rom. vii. 21—23.

^r Isa. lix. 19.

^t Rev. xii. 9.

who hath *bruised* his *Head*^t, and will *shortly bruise him under our Feet*^u.

3. We are unable to check and subdue the Motions of Evil in our Hearts, or to withstand Temptations. A Person may at some Times think of a Crime with the greatest Detestation, and imagine himself to be Proof against all Enticements to it, and say as *Hazael* did, *Am I a Dog that I should do this great Thing*, i. e. *Evil*^w, and yet be prevailed on to commit it. *Peter* imagined, that he should much rather chuse Death than deny his Master; but notwithstanding his Abhorrence of so vile a Fact, he became guilty of it, with dreadful Aggravations attending it. And why we should suppose, that we are furnished with an Ability sufficient to guard and defend us, in a Time of Temptation, any more than that Servant of Christ was, I know not. If we conceit that there is no Danger of our committing any Evil, because at present our Souls rise up against it, let us not be too confident, but be humble, knowing that our Hearts are *deceitful above all Things, and desperately wicked*^x, lest the Lord leave us to our selves, to check our Vanity, as he did *Hezekiab*, who after a Recovery from a threatening Sickness, was

^t Gen. iii. 15.

^u Rom. xvi. 20.

^w 2 Kings viii. 13.

^x Jer. xvii. 9.

guilty of very great Pride and Vain-Glory, upon which it is said, *That God left him, to try him, and that he might know all that was in his Heart*^y. He was a good Man, but entertain'd either too high an Opinion of the Exactness of his former Conduct, or cherished improper Thoughts concerning his own Strength; or it may be both, and therefore God permitted him to fall, to humble and abase him, by his Grace, in recovering of him from his Sin. If the Lord saw it meet, that a humble *Paul*, who thought himself less than the least of all Saints^z, should be grieved with a *Thorn in his Flesh*, or be buffeted by a *Messenger from Satan*, lest he should be exalted above Measure^a; certainly we cannot think too meanly of our selves, nor have too strict a Dependance on Divine Grace, to keep us from Evil, to which we are naturally inclined, and are often strongly tempted to commit. We never walk so safely as when we walk humbly. May the Lord therefore enable us to *watch*, and to join Prayer to Watchfulness, which is no less necessary; *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into Temptation*^b.

[3.] God keeps his People from falling into the Commission of gross Evils. Thus,

^y 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.

^z Eph. iii. 8.

^a 2 Cor. xii. 7.

^b Matth. xxvi. 41.

1. By maintaining in their Souls a proper Sense of Sin. If an Apprehension of the vile Nature of Sin declines in us, we are in great Danger of being overcome by it. Slight Thoughts concerning a Crime certainly pave the Way for the Commission of it, be it what it will. If once our Conscience is so far overcome by the Strength of our Passions, as to abate of its Testimony against any particular Vice, nothing can possibly prevent our sinking into it, but special and seasonable Influences of Divine Grace, to awaken the Conscience out of that Lethargy Sin has thrown it into; for it is certain we are not far from the Perpetration of that Evil, how great soever it may be. It is only at such a Time that we make a proper Resistance against Sin, in which we say as *Joseph* did, *How can we do this great Wickedness and sin against God?*

2. By keeping up a just Sense of our own Weakness in our Hearts. If once we so far forget our selves, as to imagine that we shall be able to stand in a Time of Temptation, without a strict Dependence on Christ for Strength, it is very much if we do not make bold, even with Occasions to Sin; for presuming on our own Ability, naturally tends to take us off from ne-

^c Gen. xxxix. 9.

cessary Caution, and therefore it is a *Miracle* of Grace, if we do not perpetrate the Evil which we begin to make Advances towards; this, perhaps, may have been the Case with some, but they have been preserved, yet it can hardly be supposed, without the Contraction of a great *Degree of Guilt*; and they have infinite Cause of Thankfulness, that they were not fully drawn on to the *Finishing of Sin*^d. An humble Reliance on Christ for Preservation from Evil, directs us to avoid all Occasions to Sin, as well as best fortifies us against all Temptations to it. Let us therefore say with the Psalmist, *I will go in the Strength of the Lord*^e; and take the Advice which the Apostle gave to Timothy, *Thou, therefore, my Son, be strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus*^f.

3. Abiding Thoughts of our Union with Christ directly tend to keep us from sinning. The Relation in which we stand to him is our greatest Honour, and the immoveable Foundation of our Security. Christ is our Head, and we are his Members; *He is the Head of the Body the Church*^g; and we are said to be *Members of his Body, of his Flesh, and of his Bones*^h; which the Apostle improves as an Argu-

^d James i. 15.^e Psal. lxxi. 16.^f 2 Tim. ii. 1.^g Col. i. 18.^h Eph. v. 20.

ment to Purity and Chastity of Life, *Shall I then take the Members of Christ and make them the Members of an Harlot, God forbid*ⁱ. It is exceeding disagreeable in a Member of Christ to act in direct Opposition to his Will; he is the Husband of the Church, from hence her Duty is inferrable, as much as her Dignity. This conjugal Relation of Believers to Christ, plainly suggests the great Obligations they are under to love, submit to, and reverence him; according to the Strength of their Faith in this Union, they will certainly be desirous of acting agreeable to his Command.

(2.) I proceed to consider the Reason which *Jabez* renders of this his Petition; which is, *That it may not grieve me*. Sin is a certain Occasion of Grief sooner or later; however bold Men may make with it now, they will undoubtedly find it (if rich Grace prevent not) to be the Cause of inexpressible and eternal Anguish and Sorrow. The Grief arising from it here, is either legal or evangelical.

1. It is the Occasion of legal Sorrow, which discovers it self in these two Things.

1.) A Dread of God's Anger; something of which may frequently attend a Believer; thus *Asaph* informs us, that he *remember'd God and was troubled*^k. An Ap-

ⁱ 1 Cor. vi. 15.

^k Psal. lxxvii. 3.

prehenſion of God's immense Knowledge, infinite Purity, and omnipotent Power, when attended with a Senſe of our own Guilt, raiſes the greateſt Confuſion, and deepeſt Diſtreſs in our Minds; for hence we collect, that he is fully acquainted with all our Diſobedience to him; that as Sin is contrary to his pure Nature, he cannot but hate it; and as his Power is boundleſs, to our increaſing Sorrow, we can't but be ſenſible that he is able to inflict upon us the Punishment we deſerve; that it is impoſſible we ſhould ſcreen our ſelves from Juſtice before ſuch a Judge; let not any *be deceived, for God is not mocked*¹.

2.) A Departure from God. Guilt drives Men from making an Application to him, who alone can ſave them. Thus when *Adam* had ſinned, and ſaw his *Nakedneſs*, or that he had loſt the Rectitude of his Nature; and that he had, by his Tranſgreſſion, expoſed himſelf to the juſt Diſpleaſure of his Creator, he was ſo far from humbly proſtrating himſelf before him, acknowledging his Guilt, and aſking of Pardon, that he turns his Back upon him; nor would he ever have returned, if God had not ſought him^m. A Senſe of Guilt forces all his Poſterity to act ſuch a Part, without a View of Mercy.

¹ Gal. vi. 7.

^m Gen. iii. 8—10.

These Things attend a legal Sorrow, or Grief arising from Sin and Guilt, which it is to be feared too many take to be Repentance unto Life.

2. There is an evangelical Grief on account of Sin, which the Grace of God produces in Believers, by enabling them to act Faith on a crucified Jesus; *They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and mourn, as a Man mourns for his only Son; and be in Bitterness for him, as one is in Bitterness for his First-born*ⁿ. Many Considerations maintain the Flow of this kind and ingenuous Sorrow in the Heart of a Believer. As,

1.) That Sin is committed against a gracious God and Father. The Guilt of those Sins is highly aggravated which are committed after Discoveries of Grace and Mercy, which when duly weighed by the Saints, it troubles them exceedingly to think, that they have so often offended the Lord, after Intimations of his Love have been given to their Souls. With deep Humility, and flowing Grief, they acknowledge their Unworthiness, as did the *Prodigal*, saying, *Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee*^o. Thus *David* seems to be pierced very much, with the Consideration of his having sinned against a God of infi-

ⁿ Zech. xii. 10. ^o Luke xv. 18.

nite Mercy; *According to the Multitude of thy tender Mercies blot out my Transgressions*^p. God's great Mercy was the only Foundation of his Hope of Pardon; and the Sense he had of sinning against such a God went very near him; *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this Evil in thy sight*^q. There is this great Difference between legal and evangelical Sorrow for Sin, the former arises from an Apprehension and Dread of God's Anger; the latter springs from the Exercise of Faith on his infinite Grace and Goodness.

2.) When a Believer considers that he has sinned against a kind and gracious Redeemer, a large Vent is given to his Gospel-Sorrow. It was a Sense of Christ's Love which *Peter* had, that melted him into Tears: Immediately upon his great and dreadful Fall, he received a Look of Love from his suffering Saviour; *the Lord turned and looked upon Peter*^r; this caused him to depart from those vile Persons who were the Occasion of his Sin, and to seek a private Place where he might give free Vent to his swelling Grief; *he went out and wept bitterly*^s. Could you over-hear a Believer in his private Devotion, when under a broken Sense of his Guilt, I imagine you

^p Psal. li. 10.

^q Ver. 4.

^r Luke xxii. 61.

^s Matth. xxvi. 75.

would find him to confess and mourn over it much after this Manner. How exceedingly vile and ungrateful is my Heart, which has led me to the Commission of Sin, although I have seen that to be the meritorious Cause of all those dolorous and cruel Sufferings that my dearest Saviour underwent upon my Account, to deliver me from deserved Vengeance? O wretched Ingratitude that I have been guilty of, to sin against thee my precious Redeemer, who didst shed thy Blood, *and make thy Soul an Offering for my Sin*! The Aggravations that attend my Guilt arising from hence, are far beyond my Expression or Conception; however, still permit me, to prostrate my self at thy Feet, and humbly hope in thy Merits for Pardon, and depend on thy Grace for the Destruction, of those abominable Lusts that dwell in my Heart. I greatly long for the entire Extirpation of them, that I might sin against thee no more, to the Grief of my Soul, nor to thy Dishonour.

3.) The Saints are very much troubled that they have grieved the Holy Spirit by their Sin: It was by him that they were convinced of their natural Corruption and Danger, their Need of Christ, and of his Suitableness as a Saviour; by his Influen-

* Isa. liii. 10.

ces were they enabled to hope in him, and to commit the Keeping of their Souls to him. Also as a Comforter and Witness he gave them an Evidence of their Interest in Christ, and of their being Sons to God ; *The Spirit it self beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God* ^u. All which being considered by a Believer, when under a Sense of his Guilt, inexpressibly wounds him, because he clearly apprehends that he has grieved the Holy Spirit, by whom he has been *sealed to the Day of Redemption* ^w.

4.) The Reproach that is brought upon Religion, by the unbecoming Conduct of a Believer, is the Occasion of deep Distress to his Soul. A virtuous Life is an Ornament to the Gospel which we profess to believe, and justifies the Doctrine of Grace from the foul Aspersions that are thrown upon it, by such as are opposite to it ; on the contrary, an irregular Conduct gives Occasion to those, who are not Favourers of that Doctrine, to load it with Calumny and Odium. When any are suffered, through the Strength of disorderly Passions, and powerful Temptations, to fall, who have tasted the Sweetness of those Doctrines, they are exceedingly troubled that the Truths and Interest of

^u Rom. viii. 16.

^w Eph. iv. 30.

Christ should be reproached through their Sin and Folly.

5.) That Darkness, which follows upon the Commission of Sin, in the Soul of a Believer, is very grieving to him. It is the Happiness of the Saints that they are inseparably interested in the Divine Favour; that *nothing shall be able to separate them from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus*^{*}; and that they are indissolubly united with Christ: For their eternal Security is wholly dependent thereupon. But tho' their Interest in the favourable Regard and Love of God can never be lost, yet the Sense and Apprehension of that Interest may be interrupted by Sin for a Time. Now, as the Enjoyment of the Divine Presence is the chiefest Joy of the Saints: When their Guilt separates God and them, with respect to present and gracious Communion^y; or when it veils his Face, and hides the Light of his Countenance from them, and they are covered with Clouds and Darkness; great Sorrow fills their Hearts; *Weeping endures for such a Night*^z; of black and melancholy Desertion, as *David* found by Experience, which gave rise to this Petition of his, at the Time in which he confessed his Guilt, *Restore unto me the*

^{*} Rom. viii. 38, 39.

^y Isa. lix. 2.

^z Psal. xxx. 5.

Joy of thy Salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit^a.

6.) The Weakness which the Commis-
sion of Sin occasions to the Graces of the
Saints, is the Cause of great Distress to
their Souls. The Work of Grace upon
the Heart of a Believer cannot, shall not
be destroyed, but be carried on *until the*
Day of Christ^b; notwithstanding he is li-
able to spiritual Decays, with respect to
the Exercise of Grace, and the Comfort
he may have enjoyed. Sin naturally tends
to interrupt the Exercise of Faith, to cool
our Love, and to abate the Vigor of our
Hope, as, I imagine, must be evident to
every true Christian. The Irreverence
which the Church at *Corinth* was guilty
of, in the Celebration of the Lord's Sup-
per, was much to their Disadvantage;
their coming together was not for the better
but for the worse^c; on Account thereof
many among them were weak and sickly,
and many slept^d. Which Words either in-
tend bodily Indisposition and Death, or
spiritual Weakness, Disorder, and slum-
bring, drowsy Frames. I see no Inconve-
nience to attend the latter Sense. Since
such Consequences follow upon Sin, cer-
tainly it becomes us, as we regard the

^a Psal. li. 12.

^b Phil. i. 6.

^c 1 Cor. xi. 17.

^d Ibid. ver. 30.

Comfort of our own Souls, and the Credit of Religion, to pray, that we may be kept from it, that it may not grieve us.

But to proceed,

III. *Jabez* received a gracious Answer; God granted unto him that which he requested. The Lord will hear and answer the Prayers of his People. The Church expresses her Faith in this Matter thus; *My God will bear me.* Here I shall observe,

First, That several Things may serve to encourage us to believe, that we shall be favourably regarded in our Petitions at the Divine Throne.

Secondly, The Nature of God's Answers.

Thirdly, That we should not conclude the Lord doth not regard us, if we are not speedily answered.

First, To begin with the first, several Things may serve to encourage us to believe, that we shall be favourably regarded in our Petitions at the Divine Throne.

I. The special Love and Grace of God. The Saints are interested in the peculiar Favour of the most High; for having loved them with an everlasting Love, therefore with Loving-kindness he draws them^c. His Love to them is such, that it has pre-

^c Jer. xxxi. 3.

veiled with him to give his Son to them, and for them^f, which was the greatest Gift that could be bestowed upon the Saints; from whence the Apostle concludes, that God will communicate all Things needful to us: *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all Things?*^g We are easily persuaded to grant a Favour to a Person for whom we have a particular Respect; and much more may it be thought, that the Lord, who bears an infinite Love to his People, will hear their humble Supplications to him, and give the Blessings which they shall ask.

2. Their Relation to God may justly be improved as an Argument that he will *regard their Prayer*: They are his Children, and the Objects of his tenderest Compassion. An earthly Parent, who is not become inhuman, will not be unmindful of the Petitions of his Child, when in Distress, but will give Relief if he is able; then certainly, much more, our heavenly Father will not turn a deaf Ear to our Cries, and refuse to grant us the necessary Favours we crave at his Hand.

3. Divine Promises may assist our Faith in this Thing. God calls upon us to attend to this Duty of Prayer, and promises

^f Isa. ix. 6. John iii. 16.

^g Rom. viii. 32.

to hear us; *Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you*^h. We ought to credit the Word of God, and upon a firm Persuasion of the Stability of his Promises of this kind, come *boldly* to the Throne of his Grace, *that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help us in Time of need*ⁱ.

4. The Glory of God himself is concerned in communicating those spiritual Favours to us for which we ask; as well as the Consolation of our Souls. The Happiness of the Saints is inseparably connected with Divine Honour, which is a wonderful Support to their Faith; for hence they may safely conclude upon their eternal Security. The Christian's Fruitfulness is to the Glory of his God: *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much Fruit*^k. But the Commission of Sin is to his Dishonour; and therefore we have sufficient Ground to hope, that the *Lord will bear our Voice, and that his Ears will be attentive to the Voice of our Supplications*^l, when we pray for an increase of Grace, and the subduing of our Iniquity.

5. The spiritual Prayers of the Saints are directed by the Holy Spirit, as has been already observed; it is he who *makes*

^h Mat. vii. 7.

ⁱ Heb. iv. 16.

^k John xv. 8.

^l Psal. cxxx. 2.

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Intercession for us with unutterable Groanings, and this agreeable to the Will of God^m.

Now it may be justly concluded, that the Lord will attend to those Cries of his People which he influences them to, and answer those Prayers in his own Way and Time that his Spirit enables them to put up to him.

6. God has promised to give those spiritual Blessings to his People which they pray to him for. It is impossible that our Prayers should exceed, or equal Divine Promises. God hath engaged to pardon our Guilt, to justify our Persons, to support and defend us, and to thoroughly sanctify and cleanse us: *From all your Filthiness, and from all your Idols, will I cleanse youⁿ. He will give Grace and Glory; no good Thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly^o*: More than which could not be promised, nor ever can be enjoyed; and therefore we have no Occasion to imagine, that our Petitions of a spiritual Kind will not be answered, because of their great Extent, for the Compass of our Prayers is not equal to that of the Divine Promises.

7. Christ presents our Supplications to God, which in themselves are very mean,

^m Rom. viii. 25, 26.
lxxxiv. 11.

ⁿ Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

^o Psal.

but they find Acceptance through him; he is the Intercessor of the Saints at God's right Hand, and he strengthens their Petitions to him, by praying for them, and offering up their Prayers to the Father, as perfumed with the sweet *Incense* of his prevalent Intercession; and thus they come up before God with Approbation, which affords sufficient Ground of Encouragement to believe, that we shall receive Answers of Peace from him, although *we chatter but as a Crane, or a Swallow*^p, when we pray unto him.

Secondly, Some Things may be observed concerning the Nature of those Answers, which God gives to our Prayers.

1. Sometimes he answers very speedily and quick; thus he did *Daniel*, *And whiles I was speaking in Prayer, the Man Gabriel talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee Skill and Understanding; at the Beginning of thy Supplications the Commandment came forth*^q. As soon as this Man of God began to pray to the Lord, a Commission was given to the Angel *Gabriel* to go and comfort him, and inform him of the favourable Designs he had about his People the *Jews*, who were then in Captivity. The Psalmist desired, and was favoured with a

^p Isa. xxxviii. 14.

^q Dan. ix. 21, 22, 23.

speedy

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85

speedy Answer to his Prayer from God, *In the Day when I call, answer me speedily^r. In the Day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with Strength in my Soul^c.*

2. It is the Pleasure of the Lord, at some Seasons, to defer giving us an Answer to our Prayers: We may call, and not be sensible that we are regarded, for a considerable Time; this was the Case with the Church: Says she, speaking of her Beloved, *I sought him, but I found him not; I called him, but he gave me no Answer^c*; which was a just Reproof for her ill Treatment of him. God's acting thus towards the Church, caused her bitterly to complain elsewhere, *When I cry, and shout, he shutteth out my Prayer: Thou hast covered thyself with a Cloud, that our Prayers should not pass through^u.* When God thus delays to answer our Petitions, let us not imagine that he is regardless of them, since he has acted in this Manner by his Saints heretofore, nor think of neglecting to call upon him, but as enabled, *wait patiently for him^w*: *The Vision may be for an appointed Time, but at the End it shall speak, it shall not lye; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry^x.* God

^r Psal. cii. 2.

^c Psal. cxxxviii. 3.

^t Cant. v. 6.

^u Lam. iii. 8—44.

^w Psal. xl. 1.

^x Habbak. ii. 3.

defers

defers his Answer to exercise the Faith, Hope, and Patience, of his People.

3. In some Instances the Lord's Answers to the Saints Prayers have been direct and full: Thus *David* was not only immediately, but fully answered, or God granted him that very Favour he asked. He had been guilty of Sin in numbring the People, and God, to shew his Resentment, sent the Pestilence among them, which swept away Seventy Thousand, and taught *David*, that the vast Multitude of his Subjects might soon be reduced to a very small Number; upon this he confesses his Sin, and earnestly intreats of the Lord, to put a Stop to the Raging of the Plague, and is answered according to his Desire^y.

4. Some Divine Answers to the Prayers of the Saints are not direct and full, but yet they are sufficient and satisfactory. The Apostle, when he had a *Thorn in his Flesh, the Messenger of Satan sent to buffet him*, he applies himself to God for Relief; he prays a first and second Time and receives no Answer, and the third God doth not grant him what he desired, which was, that he might be delivered from his present Distress, but the Answer given was, *My Grace is sufficient for thee, my Strength*

^y 1 Chron. xxi. 28.

*shall be made perfect in thy Weakness*². So that the Lord deferred to give any Answer at all for a Time, and when he did it was not directly suited to the Apostle's Prayer, but yet it was a gracious one, and fully satisfied *Paul*. God's all-sufficient Grace is a sufficient Support under the heaviest Trials and Temptations; and therefore, if he doth not immediately deliver us out of a particular Affliction, or from a particular Temptation, it will be enough if he is but pleased to say, *My Grace is sufficient for thee*. This leads me to observe,

Thirdly, That we should not conclude the Lord is unmindful of our Prayers, if we do not receive an immediate and direct Answer from him in some Instances. As,

1. When we are under great Afflictions we may earnestly intreat the Lord to deliver us out of those Distresses, but not have our Desires fulfilled. God designs to answer the best Purposes by afflicting of his Children. All Occurrences of Providence, however afflictive they may be, *work together for the Good of those who love God, and are the Called according to his Purpose*³. He knows infinitely better than we do, what is best for us, whether Adversity or

² 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8, 9.

³ Rom. viii. 28.

Prosperity: He intends to wean us from this World, by the Troubles he suffers to invade us, and to bring us nearer to himself by all our Trials. When the wise Designs that he has in view in afflicting of us are brought about, he *will stay his Hand, and say it is enough.* Since we are incapable of forming a Judgment, when it will be proper that we should be delivered out of any Affliction, we ought to ask for it with an entire Submission to the Will of God; and if he continues it longer upon us than we imagine may be necessary to our Advantage, although we have fervently pray'd for its Removal, let us not from thence infer, that God is unmindful of our Petitions, or that it is in vain to call upon him.

2. The same may be observed concerning a particular Temptation attending a Believer. All the Methods that Satan makes use of to provoke the People of God to commit Sin, are very distressing to their Souls; sometimes when they are violently pushed on to the Commission of Evil, they conceive that it will be impossible for them to avoid it, which causes them to say, *Lord save, or I perish.* A Saint may cry earnestly to God for a Deliverance from Temptation, and yet be suffered to labour under it for a considerable Time longer. But this is no Indication, that the Lord
is

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is unmindful of our Petitions ; he had a merciful Regard to *Paul's* Prayer, though he did not immediately free him from his Trouble.

3. If a particular Evil which we may have often prayed against is not subdued, so far as we expect it should be, this is not to be improved as an Objection to the Lord's regarding our Prayer. To instance in Unbelief: The Believer, it may be, has been frequently thrown into deep Distress by the Prevalence of that Evil, notwithstanding he has made a fervent Application to God, for the Strength and Power of it to be reduced ; and to his Apprehension it has been so, he has flattered himself it would never more gain such Advantage against him, as formerly it did, but on a sudden he finds himself to be greatly mistaken ; for whereas but a little Time since he *thought his Mountain stood strong*, yet now, being under Divine Withdrawings, *he is troubled*^b, not only loses, in a great Measure, the Sweetness of those gracious Discoveries he has been favoured with, but also very much hesitates, whether those Comforts were really from God or not, is afraid that they were not the Produce of powerful Grace : Which may hold true of

^b Psal. xxx. 7.

other Evils, for ought I know, though I chose to instance in this.

4. If the Lord doth not give us such a Degree of Comfort as we have intreated for, yet he may mercifully hear our Prayer. It is the Pleasure of God to favour some of his Children with much of his spiritual Presence, so that their *Consolation aboundeth by Christ^c*. He gives to them clear and distinct Conceptions of his everlasting Love, and of the Designs of that Love; and also of the surprizing Steps which he has taken, in order to accomplish those Designs: He assists them to act a strong and lively Faith on these Things: Thus they are blessed with an Eminency of Knowledge of, and Faith in, *the deep Things of God^d*. Weaker Christians may be discouraged because their Experience is not so enlarged and ripened; especially when they have applied to the Throne of Grace, and earnestly prayed, that *God's Comforts* might in the same Manner *delight their Souls^e*. But we ought to consider, that in God's Family there are some *Fathers*, or such who are more grown and experienced; and, that there are *young Men and Babes^f*, whose Acquaintance with

^c 2 Cor. i. 5.
xciv. 19.

^d 1 Epist. Chap. ii. 10.
^f 1 John ii. 12, 13.

^e Psal.

heavenly Mysteries is not so great. Christ hath *Lambs*, as well as full grown *Sheep*, in his Fold, and under his Care; these he acts tenderly towards, for he *gathers them with his Arms, and carries them in his Bosom*^s. Now, if we are not equal in Understanding and Faith to some Believers; or, if we are not Fathers in God's House, this should not discourage us, but rather we ought to be thankful, that we are Babes in Christ; or that we do partake of the same Life and Grace with those who are Fathers, though not in the same Degree.

5. If our Gifts are not enlarged equal to our Desires, we are not to infer from thence, that the Lord is regardless of our Prayers. A Believer, when he has a lively Sense of Christ's Love to him, and his Heart glows with Love to Christ, he may ardently desire such a Communication of Gifts from him that might fit him for eminent Service, and yet not have these Desires answered; this is no Objection to God's favourably accepting of them. As *David's* Desire, and Intention to build an House for the Lord, was approved of by him^h, so these Desires of his People, to be furnished with such Gifts as would render

^s Isa. xl. 11.

^h 2 Sam. xii. 7.

them extensively useful, are far from being unacceptable to him, although he may not design them to that extensive Usefulness; as he did not intend that *David* should erect his Temple, though he approved of his Inclination to do it.

6. God may not see meet to make us of that Service in the World, and in the Church, which we desire to be; but neither should this occasion us to think he is unmindful of our Petitions. He is resolved upon carrying on his own Interest, in spite of all Opposition; and he makes use of what Instruments he pleases in doing it. Sometimes he effects the most wonderful Things by such Means that we should imagine are very unlikely to be attended with Success; nay, which certainly would not be, but that they are used by Omnipotence, which puts Efficacy into the Means it uses, how much soever they may seem unsuited to the Nature of the Work for which they are designed. It may be the Pleasure of the Lord to make some of his Servants more eminently serviceable in his Interest than others, to whom they are far inferior in Gifts; this he does to hide *Pride from Man*ⁱ, and to teach us, that whatever our Abilities be, the Success at-

ⁱ Job xxxiii. 17.

tending the Exercise of them is wholly from God. If we are not of that Service which we desire to be, it ought to keep us humble; but we should not sink into Diffidence and Unbelief on that Account.

The Lord may not see it proper to answer us in these Particulars mentioned, in that Manner or Degree which we could be glad of; but hence we ought not to infer, that our Prayers are unacceptable to him, or that he will not hear us, in what more immediately concerns our Welfare and Happiness. The Reason of which is plainly this, he hath not given us such clear Evidence of his Designs concerning us in these Things, as he has given of his kind Thoughts about us, respecting our Felicity hereafter. The Divine Word doth not inform us, how far we shall be afflicted and tempted whilst here; nor how far Sin shall be subdued, or what Degrees of Grace we shall have, how large our Gifts shall be, nor of what Service we shall be in this World, but it gives us clear Evidence concerning those Things which relate to our eternal State; such as,

1. The Knowledge we have of our Danger and Misery by Nature. Whilst Men are unregenerate they are insensible of their spiritual *Wretchedness* and *Misery*,
and

and *Poverty*, and *Blindness*, and *Nakedness*; they imagine themselves *to be rich, and increased with Goods, and to have need of nothing*^k; in their own Esteem they are *whole, and have no need of the Physician*^l; but when born again, or divinely enlightened, they behold the exceeding Corruption of their Nature^m, the great Transgressions of their Livesⁿ, their own Inability to perform any Duty in an acceptable Manner^o; the Necessity of a perfect Righteousness, in order to Justification before God, and the Imperfection that attends their own, that it's no better than *filthy Rags*^p; hence they conclude, that they are entirely undone in themselves, or irrecoverably lost, unless Divine Favour interposes, and prevents their sinking into eternal Ruin.

2. The Apprehensions we have of Christ as a Saviour. An Acquaintance with the excelling Glory of his Person is a free Gift^q. The Knowledge of his Merits being the only and effectual procuring Cause of the Remission of Sins; of his Righteousness, as being available to, and the alone Matter of a Sinner's Justification before

^k Rev. iii. 17.

ⁿ Rom. v. 20.

^q 2 Cor. iv. 6.

^l Matth. ix. 12.

^o Rom. viii. 8.

^m Rom. vii. 18.

^p Isa. lxiv. 6.

God;

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God; and a Sense of the Fulness of his Grace being solely equal to the Supply of our spiritual Needs, are owing to the Influences of the Holy Spirit upon us ^r.

3. An entire Dependance on him, as thus suited to our Case, is an Effect of powerful Grace; for he expressly tells us, *That no Man can come to him, except the Father, which hath sent him, draw him* ^t. And therefore if we have experienced such a Work, we may be assured that we are *passed from Death to Life* ^t, or are *spiritually quickened*, though we were once *dead in Trespasses and Sins* ^u; and may say with *Manoah's Wife*, *If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a Burnt-Offering, and a Meat-Offering at our Hands; neither would he have shewed us all these Things, nor would, as at this Time, have told us such Things as these* ^x. It will be no Presumption to conclude, that *God has loved us with an everlasting Love*, if he has thus drawn us with *Loving-Kindness* ^y; or, that *God has predestinated us to become conformed to the Image of his Son* ^z; for he has really begun to accomplish such a gracious

^r John xvi. 14.

^t John vi. 44.

^t 1 John iii. 14.

^u Eph. ii. 1.

^x Judges xiii. 23.

^y Jer. xxxi. 3.

^z Rom. viii. 29.

Decree upon us, and will fully perfect it. Our Confidence hereof is securely built upon the never-failing Foundation of his unalterable Love, and steddy Purpose^a; *Being confident of this very Thing, that he which hath begun a good Work in you will perform it, until the Day of Christ^b, when he will present us faultless before the Presence of his Glory with exceeding Joy^c.*

^a Psal. ciii. 17. Rom. viii. 30.
^c Jude, ver. 20.

^b Phil. i. 6.

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